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THE HEREAFTER, A POEM BY
STEPHEN MARION WATSON

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Will the soul that is within us
Live beyond the fleeting breath?
Will the story life is telling
Still continue after death?
Go and ask the flowing river
If returns the rising mist;
Ask the stars that shine above us,
If at dawn they still exist.

Have our dear ones gone before us
Left us never to return?
Have their farewells all been spoken
Like the fires that cease to burn?
Ask the falling leaves of autumn
If the winter will remain;
Ask the ebbing tide of ocean,
Whether that will come again.

Were not eyes made for the daylight
And the ear to catch a sound?
Were the hands not made for labor,
And the feet to touch the ground?
See the creeping things beneath us,
Reptiles sleep till sunny spring;
Ask the shrouded chrysalis, if
He shall mount on buoyant wing.

Was the fin not made for water,
And the wing for sky and air?
Was there not a foreordaining
In all things everywhere?
For our hunger food is plenty,
For our thirst have we supply?
Sleep is waiting to be gracious
To the weary drooping eye.

Can we look for signs portending
The approach of coming day?
Can we calculate the harvest
From the blossoms in the May?
Ne'er forgot the sun his rising,
Nor the fruit its time to fall;
There's a time and place for all things,
And each must fulfill its call.

Is our life for naught created,
And a blank in wait for us?
Is not man above all creatures?
But why we this theme discuss?
At our birth we had no bidding,
Naught we knew of parents dear;
Yet all things for us were ready,
Waiting arms received us here.

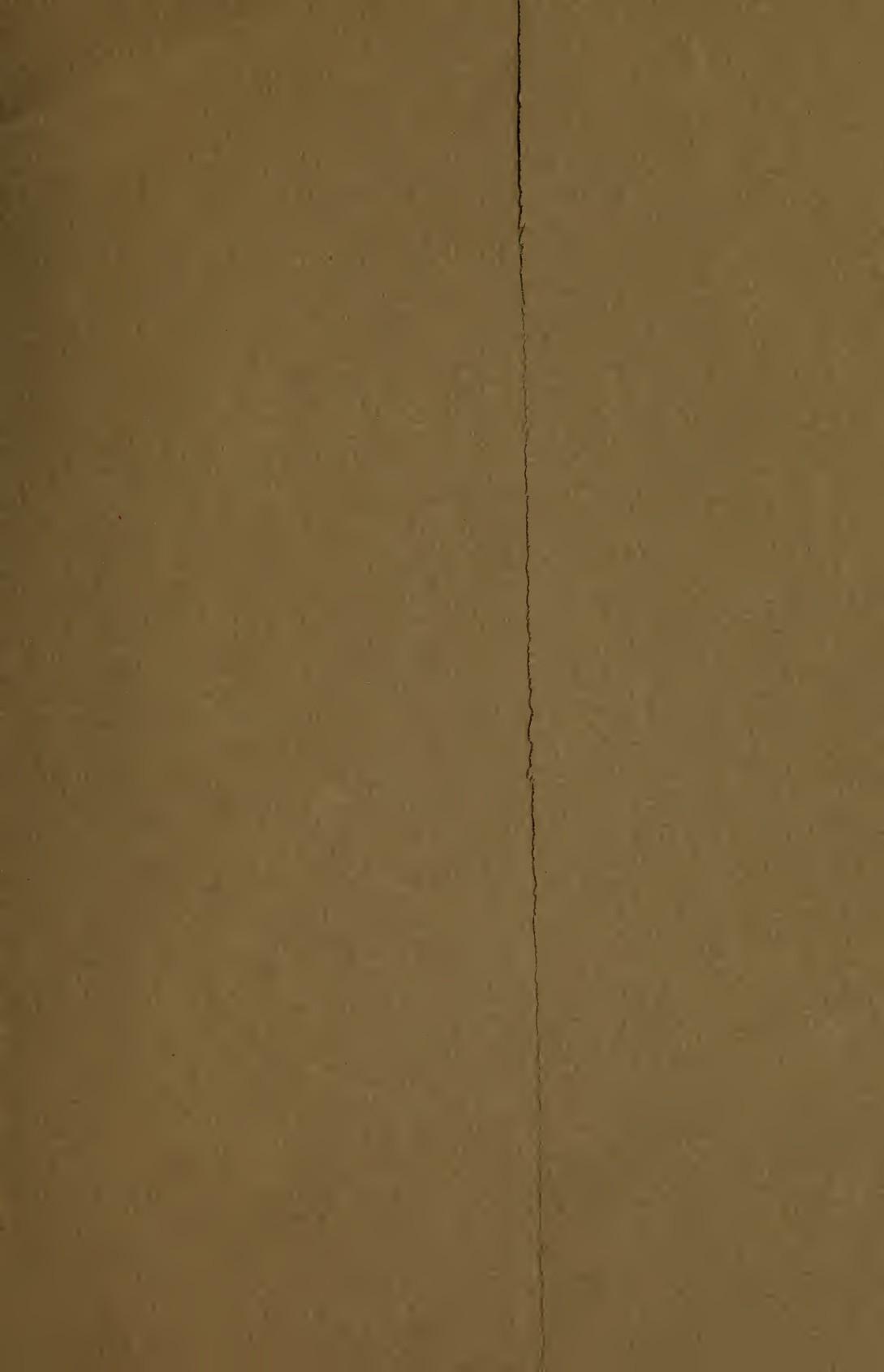
Shall the soul then at our dying
Ever after cease to be?
Shall this be remuneration.
For sweet immortality?
Read in Nature's open pages,
Read in earth and sea and air;
Mansions in the great hereafter
Ready to receive us there.

May the empty satisfaction
Gathered from our patient strife,
May the longing, craving, in us
For a higher better life,
Be hereafter compensated,
Be hereafter gratified?
As the harvest follows seedtime,
So shall we be satisfied.

For Remembrance

This poem, *The Hereafter*, was written some time ago by my father, Stephen Marion Watson, in answer to a question on his belief in immortality. My father was born in Scarborough, Maine, January 22, 1836. His last years were very happily spent among his books and beloved friends in Chicago, Illinois. One morning, June 7, 1920, after he had passed his eighty-fourth birthday he beautifully and serenely entered into that life of the great hereafter. As some of his friends have asked for his poem it is here set to type and printed for them in the School of Education, printshop of The University of Chicago.

*Mary L. Watson
Easter, 1921*



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